**POLICY BL3 WHITLOCKS END FARM**

**OBJECTIONS**

1. **Public Transport/Traffic Congestion:**

Currently the Whitlock’s Farm has been given over to the Christmas trees for a number of years, and there have already been homes added along the bridle path that have had a deleterious effect on the ability to enjoy walking dogs due to the danger of traffic. In addition, it has already meant increased traffic access to Bills Lane. Bills Lane already struggles with the volume of traffic at the junction with Haslucks Green Road and at the junctions of Shakespeare Drive and Burman Road, all used at rat runs to the Stratford Road or access to car parking at either Shirley Station or Whitlocks End.

The queues tail back considerably leaving current residents of the Badgers estate suffering the brunt of this when trying to use the only exit from the estate, There is now almost constant traffic noise coming from Bills Lane with late night speeding. Increased road safety risks there already having been a fatal accident due to speeding vehicle. There will inevitably be an increase in traffic consequent to other proposed developments in Cheswick Green, Dickens heath, Tidbury Green. The suggestion that there should be a focus of vehicular traffic movements away from congested Dickens heath Road to Bills Lane/Haslucks Green Road is plain ignorance of the volume of traffic already using Bills Lane and the chaotic congestion at expanding peak times at junctions. It will impact on surrounding roads as vehicles try and avoid congestion.

Further rat runs go through Tythe Barn Lane and part of DH village is mainly by people from the large and populous Wythall Parish (Drakes Cross, Hollywood, etc) who work in Solihull, Blythe Valley Business Park, etc. Extra people/traffic will exacerbate congestion through the Dickens Heath Village, on the A34 and surrounding roads especially at peak times. This is not being addressed by SMBC and the new Local Plan does not seem to realise the scale of this problem (or even that it exists).

The building of these extra plots will lead to more and more traffic being shunted on the A34 and surrounding roads by the of some 4,000 extra cars (by some 2050 houses all to be in the Blythe ward).  This will of course be exacerbated by traffic from any proposed schools with school runs leading to more chaos than there is presently.

The road system already cannot cope with the volume of traffic at most times of the day. There is limited scope for improving the A34 arterial road system already the most congested roadie Britain outside of London. The A34 Stratford Road both Northbound and Southbound through Hall Green is the worst for congestion. Financial services comparison website GoCompare analysed data from a number of different sources and the A34 came

out as the worst. The A34 Northbound between Robin Hood Lane and the A4540 is the worst for congestion with motorists experiencing delays of 44 hours per year. The A34 Southbound between the A4540 and Shaftmoor Lane has delays of 42 hours per year. The research also revealed Birmingham as the fourth worst city in the UK for congestion with drivers stuck in traffic for an estimated 34 hours per year. The date was collected from a variety of different sources, including INRIX & the Department of Transport. The 38% load in Shirley/Blythe/Dickens Heath will undoubtedly significantly contribute to this problem regardless of what improvements are made to public transport, which can be only limited.

Impact on the function of high performing Green Belt status of land will be lost which is contrary to Government Policy; there would be coalescence between Dickens Heath, Whitlock End, Majors Green and Bromsgrove District. There would be added demands on already crowded local rail services and inadequate parking at the stations and Village centres.

Dickens heath has gone beyond the original intention. It now has some 1800 dwellings (and increasing) but the original design was for only 700 dwellings. The impact of this level of population on the local road system, which has had no road improvements to compensate for this additional growth, is significant. Outside the village built boundary, the roads are primarily narrow country lanes. It suggests that attention should be diverted away from the Shirley area and focussed elsewhere in the Borough. It has already impacted on Bills Lane volume of traffic. Having resided off Bills Lane for 30+years, the impact has been remarkable and significant.

With the low frequency (hourly) and lack of car parking at Wythall, Whitlocks End is heavily used and its car park is overloaded now. The service and car parking at Whitlocks End was expanded primarily to serve Dickens Heath (1 km to the east) was developed but it is now also being used substantially by commuters who do not live in the immediate vicinity and who travel from further afield. In its own way, it has become a "Park and Ride"

destination.  The car park is now operating at full capacity and with no alternative

parking is effectively locking out the local users it was originally intended to service. It is programmed for expansion to meet additional demand from both existing and new residential developments in Dickens Heath and the Blythe Villages area. The Shirley station is also at full capacity. Exiting from Bills Lane onto Haslucks Green Road is now most difficult and at times dangerous and will be exacerbated with Whitlocks Farm plan

with undoubted consequential gridlocking.

However much the council wish to promote cycling and walking to the station, people will not, they will rely on cars to get them to and from the station.  Few people will want to 'dodge' busy traffic, at peak times on a bicycle or walk in inclement weather.  They will resort to cars and snarl up the roads further.

1. **Adverse Impact on Health Services**

The GP practices which have combined and pooled resources are already now difficult to access with long queues to get through to the Practices and appointments on emergency basis. Whilst this is been accentuated by the Covid 19 situation, it was an increasing problem before then. There is a national shortage of GPs with locums being used leading to a poorer service. Local Hospital resources have been diminished with Solihull Hospital being downgraded and plans to close all together.

The Covid situation has highlighted the perilous situations are hospitals are already in. There have been a large number of homes for the elderly that have been built in Shirley. This will exponentially increase demand due to pressure of later life care, which is more complex and demanding and a real demand on local resources.

NHS dentists are hard to find in the area.

1. **Eradication of Greenbelt**
2. **Impact on Environment/Local Wildlife Sites**

The existing trees clean the air, reduce the excess water collecting at that location, provide a natural environment to existing wildlife and would amount to urban sprawl on a large area of Green Belt. Site BL3 will leave a narrow gap between Dickens Heath and Shirley creating urban sprawl, the prevention of which is one of the purposes of the Green Belt as stated in the NPPF. It is disingenuous to use the problems with the Dickens heath development as grounds for proposing Site BL3.

within an area of high sensitivity. sites in question provide green 'breathing space' for wildlife, fauna and flora, locals and visitors to the area. As such, the draft concept masterplan proposes to retain historic landscape features, such as hedgerows and standard trees, and the meadows and woodland designated as Local Wildlife Sites'   If the proposed development goes ahead with the increased traffic jams and consequent pollution, wildlife will be deleteriously affected.

The local sports club recently wanted to improve amenities this was refused by SMBC on the grounds of the detrimental effect it would have on the local fauna, flora and wildlife.  The council have now 'about-faced' disregarding this policy and want to build all over the area.

Trade Off with Site 13 is not a valid argument and is misplaced is misplaced with Shirley bearing a disproportionate amount of housing development and having an unfair burden of nearly 40% of new homes provided.

Dickens Heath and Tidbury Green has already taken its 'fair share' of development during the last Local Plan allocations.

The site in question, adjacent to Whitlock End/ Dickens Heath, is close to four local wildlife sites. In addition, being only one kilometre from a further 6 significant ecological natural sites. This development is too close to these sensitive sites and will have a catastrophic effect on the area, flora, fauna and wildlife, not to mention the quality of life for human inhabitants.

1. **Risk of Flooding**

These ecological sensitive high grade greenbelt sites perpetually flood and are therefore natural soak ways that mitigate local flood risk. Thoughtless development like this creates flood problems and removes the flood protection from the surrounding area it currently protects.

Whilst flood zones are said to be avoided, the building of houses with concrete drives and small gardens will only exacerbate real flooding issues. The reduction of the Christmas Tree Planting and replacement with homes will further contribute to higher water levels. Badgers estate already has roads looking like rivers and my side passage if often flooded, the adjacent verge being inadequate to cope with the ever increasing heavy rainfalls.

1. **Loss of Amenities**

Most of the playing fields (sports clubs) west of DH are still under threat, including the extensive Old Yardleins RFC. Only Shirley Town FC opposite Whitlock's End station and the small football field just east of it are retained. The 'sports hub' that was in Richborough Estates proposal on the land north of Tythe Barn Lane, of 2016, is not proposed - that was

contrary to Green Belt policy. It is not clear where the playing fields are to go to. Sport England (the Government's Sports Quango) has a policy to protect playing fields and did oppose the Solihull Plan Site 4 proposals in comments in 2017. Loss of sport grounds/recreation areas for 9 clubs which is contrary to Government Policy.

1. **Sustainability**

There are other sites in the Solihull area that are of a lower grade of Green Belt with lesser adverse impacts and are in a more sustainable location. The Council’ sustainability analysis should be bought into question

The parishes of Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath and Tidbury Green, the “Blythe Villages,” have taken substantial development under past Plans, notably the Dickens Heath new village, constructed in the last 15 years and 1,000 dwellings at Blythe Valley. It is estimated that this area has taken a further 2,000 dwellings over the past 5 years but the roads, services and infrastructure have not been upgraded to accommodate this growth. Yes, we

need more houses but they should be the right type and in the right place. With no new employment areas proposed in the Local Plan and little existing local employment, residents have to drive to their work, which is predominantly located to the east of the Borough, causing commuter chaos in this area along rural roads that were not designed for such volumes of traffic. This is an unsustainable situation now without the additional

proposed developments exacerbating this situation. it should be noted that Solihull Council fought hard to stop some of these major developments over the past 5 years which include Mount Dairy Farm at Cheswick Green, the CLEOBURY Lane and Braggs Farm sites at Dickens Heath and the two sites at Tidbury Green currently under construction being Lowbrook Farm and Tidbury Green Farm, totalling some 800 dwellings. These were all won on Appeal because of the calculations of increased housing need. The reasons that the Council gave to contest these developments at these Appeal hearings still apply to the proposed housing sites in the Local Plan.

Shirley South appears to be carrying the main burden of the residential development throughout the Borough.  It must be highlighted that Shirley and Blythe Valley area has already sustained significant redevelopment over the past 5 to 8 years and the current overall Blythe plans amount to 38% al a disproportionate amount. location,

The additional housing is not being absorbed within the Greater Birmingham's initiative, in order utilise the Brown Field First site strategy, promoted by Andy Street.